

# THE PHOTOGRAPHIC CABINET OF MARIANO JÚDEZ Y ORTIZ (1856-1874) AND THE VERSATILITY OF THE STEREOSCOPIC CAMERA

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## ABSTRACT

The cabinet of Mariano Júdez y Ortiz (1856-1874) in Saragossa was one of the most important photographic studios in Spain of the time. His production was not limited, as in most contemporary cabinets, to exploiting the profitable fashion of the portrait in the «carte de visite» format. He also ventured in with his heavy photographic equipment and his portable laboratory out of the comfort and security of his cabinet to photograph an urban series of views of Saragossa city (ca. 1860) and the natural landscape (waterfalls and gardens) of the disentailed Monasterio de Piedra (1866-1871), also in the same province.

The analysis of the works made from his stereoscopic camera will serve to disprove an affirmation that has already been converted into being common place among historians of photography about the presence in most of the first cabinets of multi-objective cameras (4, 6, 8 lenses etc.) as those used by Disdéri for the realization of series of portraits in CDV format. As the works of Júdez demonstrate, one of the great virtues of the stereoscopic camera was its versatility. Through its use, it was possible not only to create stereoscopic views, but it was also used to make two consecutive portrait shots in CDV format on the same plate.

**Keywords:** Stereoscopy, carte de visite, multiple-objective camera, Júdez, Disdéri, Saragossa, Spain

Some years ago, while I was selecting the materials that would be part of a photo exhibition dedicated specifically to the formats "carte de visite" and "cabinet card" in the city of Zaragoza<sup>1</sup>, I realized with some surprise the almost total absence, both in public institutions and in important national private collections, of the so-called multiple-objective cameras that, in principle, are believed to be responsible for the huge amount of photographs sold by the different photographic cabinets in these formats from the 1860s and during the following decades.

In the institutions and collections consulted, it was relatively common to find single-objective wooden cameras and also stereoscopic cameras dated to the 19th century. However, I was only able to find one of the so-called multiple-objective camera preserved in the Photomuseum of the coastal town of Zarautz in the Basque Country<sup>2</sup>.

Does this mean that only one camera that was of the multiple objective type exists out of all of the Spanish collections consulted, when on the contrary, there were hundreds of thousands of portraits and Spanish urban views conserved in the mentioned formats? The result of this unsuccessful search, in fact, came to suggest that the Spanish photographic cabinets, with very few exceptions (probably those established in biggest cities, and with a larger clientele), did not use multiple-objective cameras to take photographs in the "carte de visite" format. The great majority made use of versatile stereoscopic cameras.

It was a more than reasonable hypothesis but, at that time and with the photographic material recovered, it was not easy to prove. However, today, thanks to the meritorious work undertaken years ago by public institutions and private collectors, we have a much broader set of photographic materials that will allow us to refute, with images, the veracity of this hypothesis.

For this, I will take as a reference the photographic production of the cabinet of Mariano Júdez y Ortiz (1834-1874), the most important in the city of Zaragoza and one of the most notable of his time in Spain. The different uses of his stereoscopic camera, which we will study in detail, will act as a paradigm of the "modus operandi" carried out by a large part of "provincial" photographic cabinets and possibly also by a considerable number of European cabinets.

## Brief biographical notes on the Spanish photographer Mariano Júdez

First of all, it is necessary to make a brief presentation of the photographer chosen as a model for our demonstration. Mariano Júdez y Ortiz managed, from 1856 in his hometown, one of the most important and best equipped cabinets of his time, located in the central avenue of the Coso. There were successive changes of numbering and locality: Coso, 18 and 19 (1856- 1862), Coso, 35 (1862-1864) and finally, Coso, 33 (1864-1874). Regarding his training, as recorded in his press advertising, he received lessons in Paris from great masters of photography such as Nadar, Disdéri, Mayer, Pierson, Ken and Bellocq.

1) Formats known in Spain as "tarjeta de visita" and "Tarjeta Álbum", respectively. The exhibition was entitled *Primeros tiempos de la fotografía en Zaragoza. Formatos "carte de visite" y "cabinet card"* and was inaugurated in the gallery of Cajalón, Zaragoza, June and July 2010.

2) *Photomuseum, inventory no. 2107: French walnut wood "carte de visite" camera with four lenses and tripod.*

In front of his camera, he posed a good number of political, religious, cultural and artistic personalities of the capital of Aragon. This dispersed set of photographs constitutes an exceptional and irreplaceable gallery of portraits for the historical memory of the city of Zaragoza. Remarkable was the good relationship established by Júdez with local artists who were also part of the gallery, among which could be mentioned painters such as Bernardino Montañés, Mariano Pescador, Marcelino de Unceta and sculptors such as Antonio José Palao, whose works of art have also been reproduced in photographs of different formats. One of them, the Huesca painter León Abadías Santolaria, worked for a short time in 1861 in his photographic cabinet as an assistant. He was in charge of coloring some of his photographic images with gouache and oil.

But, in addition to his important work as a portraitist, his series of stereoscopic views and photo albums of the monastery of Piedra, taken between 1866 and 1871, granted him a privileged place within the panorama of landscape photography in Spain. During these visits to the picturesque landscape of the Piedra River, invited by his host, writer and politician Juan Federico Muntadas, he also coincided with the famous Belgian landscape painter Carlos de Haes, whom he later portrayed in his photographic cabinet in Zaragoza. Along with these natural landscape views, Júdez also transported his camera outside of the studio to produce a good number of urban views of the city of Zaragoza in different formats (carte de visite, stereoscopic, cabinet card etc).

The recovery and knowledge of his photographic production, partly scattered and partly disappeared, is a task requiring

patience that we have been dedicated to for decades. This has disappointed private collectors, public institutions and historians because unfortunately, all of the negatives that were stored in his studio in Coso, 33 were destroyed by a terrible fire in 1887 at the time of his successor, the photographer Anselmo Coyne.

### Disdéri, the “carte de visite” portrait and the multiple-objective camera

Leaving behind the time of the pioneers, the daguerreotype in copper and the contemporary calotype or talbotype, a new discovery in photography that marked the transition to wet collodion (Scott Archer, 1851) and its albumin positive, propitiated the gradual establishment of the first photographic cabinets in cities.

The patent that truly revolutionized and popularized photography was the reduced and economical format of the “carte de visite”, in Spanish “tarjeta de visita”. In 1854, the Parisian photographer André Adolphe Disdéri patented this format, inspired by the small size of the printed visiting cards<sup>3</sup>. It was not until 1859 when he began to massively commercialize this type of portrait, thanks to the decisive impulse granted to his patent, visits to his studio by the Emperor Napoleon III with his wife, the Empress Eugenia de Montijo and his son, the prince imperial. From that moment on, the most select of the Parisian and European aristocracy went incessantly to Disdéri, seduced by the undeniable charm of the new photographic format:

«Le succès alors réellement extraordinaire de Disdéri fut légitimement dû à son ingénieuse idée de la carte de visite. Son flair d’industriel avait senti juste et au moment précis. Disdéri venait de créer une véritable mode qui allait engouer d’un coup le monde entier. Plus encore, en renversant la proportion économique jusque-là établie, c’est-à-dire en donnant infiniment plus pour infiniment moins, il popularisait définitivement la

photographie. En fin il faut reconnaître que nombre de ces petites images improvisées avec une rapidité prestigieuse devant la défilé sans fin de la clientèle ne manquaient ni d’un certain goût ni de charme»

Félix Tournachon Nadar: *Quand j’étais photographe*, Paris, 1900.

3) McCAULEY, E. A. (1985).

Around 1865, the New York photographer Mathew Brady sold, in his cabinet, the so-called “carte de visite Imperial” in a somewhat larger format, which later became known as a “cabinet card”, which in Spain was also used under the names “Tarjeta Álbum” and “Retrato Álbum”. Both formats, “carte de visite” and “cabinet card”, were the hegemonic ones during the 1860s and 1870s.

The “cardmanía”, or fever, was created by the portrait in both formats from the principles of the 1860s. It shocked society equally in Europe and America. Together with the photographs themselves, luxurious albums were sold, some of which were even subject to patents and others were of a more artisan manufacturing that all families from the aristocratic to the moderately well-off prided themselves on exhibiting in their salons and social gatherings<sup>4</sup>.

Later on, they began to manufacture elegant viewers for the photographs, including cartoscopes, graphoscopes and stereographoscopes etc., which allowed, through the incorporation of magnifying lenses, the viewer to enjoy even the smallest details of the discrete photographs.

Regarding the type of camera or cameras used by Disdéri to carry out his huge production of photographic portraits, nothing is reported about it in the 1854 patent. However, some paper albumins have been preserved with up to eight portraits printed per sheet, without a guillotine, taken as early as 1857. Elizabeth Anne McCauley thought that the French photographer could use multiple-objective cameras, which

soon became popular among Parisian photographers especially from 1860 onward. However, as the photohistorian also points out, during the first years of the start-up of his still unknown “carte de visite” format, he had to use a camera with a lens and a mobile chassis which allowed him to take successive portraits on the same plate, or even to make use of a double or stereoscopic objective camera, which had been the model present in the panorama of photography since the early 1850s<sup>5</sup>.

### Two consecutive shots: a couple of portraits in CDV by Júdez

Fortunately, despite the devastating fire at Júdez’s old studio, which we have referred to earlier, there are several hundred portraits in the formats of “carte de visite” and “cabinet card” made in the past by the photographer from Zaragoza. Over time, we have been able to locate and catalogue an important set of images in which we have unequivocally confirmed

the presence of numerous pairs of portraits taken during the same photographic session. The pairs of portraits confront each other. However, they present different modalities or typologies. For example, in the case of a single person portrayed, this can be different poses for each of the two portraits (front and back, with a hat and without it etc.) but the photographer could also change the frame of one to another portrait (full body and bust etc). In addition to this, Júdez also used the same plate to carry out two individual portraits of a couple showing a marriage successively.

As mentioned, there are numerous examples that we have found within the set of photographic portraits taken by the photographer from Zaragoza. Nevertheless, among the hundreds of photographic images studied, we did not find any

portrait that presented more than two variants. That is to say, never did a portrait present three or four poses or attitude, or different frames where the same person was portrayed. It was always just a pair of portraits. This shows that Júdez never used a multi-objective camera but that he used his stereoscopic camera to make them instead, something that should have been usual for most photographers of his time.

The “modus operandi” is easy to evoke. First a portrait was made with one of the lenses of the stereoscopic camera and successively, after modifying the pose or framing of the protagonist of the portrait, the second shot was made with the second lens. Regarding the format, it was either “carte de visite”, “cabinet card” or “album card”, depending more on the distance of the lens at the bottom of the camera body where

4) Maas, E. (1982)

5) Opus cit. note 3: 34

the glass plate was emulsified to the wet collodion, and on the additional wooden mask that would be interposed between the lens and plate that would frame both successive portraits.

There are numerous examples of pairs of portraits that have been recovered which reveal the use of the stereoscopic camera by the photographer from Zaragoza. Among them, standing out the most, were those made by the famous landscape artist of Belgian origin, Carlos de Haes (Brussels, 1829 - Madrid, 1898) with whom the photographer made friends with at the Monasterio de Piedra. In one of them, the painter adopts an eccentric pose on his back with the attitude of a spectator, like someone contemplating a painting or observing a landscape through a window. In the second portrait, he adopts an attitude or more conventional pose, sitting on a chair with a small open book on his knees. Of course, his gaze is set on the heights, like someone who is reflecting on what he has just read; it is not very spontaneous or natural. Both portraits, in any case, are a good example of the complicity between the photographer and the portrayed.

Another pair of portraits that we have selected shows the painter from Zaragoza, Bernardino Montañés (1825-1893), in two consecutive shots taken during the same session. They reveal his clothes, hairstyle and face. The interest in this pair of portraits lies not so much in the different poses but in the framing of both portraits. One of them portrays Montañés, as a full-body, sitting on a chair and leaning on a table on which several books rest, holding in his hand a sheet of paper which could be one of his drawings, extracted from the large portfolio that rest at his feet. However, in the second portrait, the frame closes until it passes from the general frame (full-body portrait) through to the detail of the bust portrait.

On the contrary, less elaborated on are the two portraits, in the most exclusive "cabinet card" format, of the writer and politician Federico Muntadas Jornet (Barcelona, 1826 - 1912), with subtle differences in the position of the face (frontal in one and side-ways in the other) and legs (in one of them with his right leg resting on a rock or simulated stone). The backdrop with a painted landscape alludes to the picturesque corners of the disentailed Monasterio de Piedra, of which the portrayed was the owner.

On the other hand, a sample of the portraits of couples can be the pair of portraits of the marriage of the sculptor Antonio José Palao (Murcia, 1824 - Zaragoza, 1886) and his wife, Concepción Ortubia. To be more precise, we should talk about this being a family portraits or even a trio of portraits. This is because the sculptor's wife holds her baby on her lap. In any case, what allowed us to establish the family relationship between both portraits in the format "carte de visite" was his

finding inside the album of his common friend, the painter Mariano Pescador y Escárate, in two pages facing one another, in the which the manuscript inscriptions with their respective identifications were preserved.

As a colophon to this short selection of portraits, we present those made of the theatrical set designer Mariano Pescador Escárate (Zaragoza, 1816 - 1886), who was very popular in his hometown for his painted scenes and curtains for the Main Theater. The particularity of this pair of portraits lies in the game of mirrors that the photographer Mariano Júdez devised from the first pose adopted by his friend, the painter Mariano Pescador. It shows us the painter sitting with the framing being that of a half body, which allows us to see how his left hand is hidden inside the pocket of his trousers. We know from the press of the time that the painter had suffered a cut on that hand during

the recent work carried out in the altarpiece of the cathedral of Murcia. But, in addition to this detail that illustrates the complicity between photographer and portrayed, in the second shot, as if it were a game of mirrors, the body of the person being portrayed leans to the left and in this case, curiously, the hand that is hidden in the pocket is no longer the left but the right, while the injured hand is skillfully and subtly located outside of the frame (thus hiding the possible injury or amputation).

### One shot: three different views

We have already seen how Mariano Júdez elaborated on his portraits in the formats of "carte de visite" and "cabinet card" by making two consecutive shots with each one of the lenses of his stereoscopic camera. The photographer from Zaragoza

also took images in the stereoscopic or “in relief” format (the name by which this photographic technique was popularly known). In this case, it was not used for portraits but for urban views of Zaragoza and the natural landscape of the picturesque Monasterio de Piedra in the same province.

In front of the two previous consecutive shots, now a single synchronized shot due to the two lenses of the stereoscopic camera, we are able to generate three different views: a stereoscopic or double view, and two individualized views (left and right) in “carte de visite” format.” To be more precise, the double image impressed on the negative plate allowed for the development of three images into two different formats: one stereoscopic card and two “carte de visite” cards, with slight differences between them.

There are several examples of this practice that we have been able to recover within the landscape production of Júdez. One of the particularities that they present is that by adapting the stereoscopic images (originally in square format) to the more stylized “carte de visite” format, they are not always transformed into vertical views but they do so indistinctly in both orientations (vertical and horizontal). We have even found some examples in which, from the same stereoscopic view, one view (left) is marketed in the vertical format and the other (right) is in the horizontal format, as we shall see. There are different possibilities for the positive images from a single stereoscopic plate, which the photographer from Zaragoza will play with at his convenience, as we can see.

Among the selected images that we have shown here, we began with a *View of the Plaza de la Constitución de Zaragoza*

(current Plaza de España), presided over by the monumental Fountain of Neptune, also known as “of the Princess”. Next to it, we exposed the two vertical views (left and right) that it generated in the “carte de visite” format. As a curiosity, you can see that both correspond to different positives in time, while one of them retains the red border of some of its first

productions (ca. 1860) and the other presents the cardboard without a border. The second set of images consist of the stereoscopic view of the *Río Ebro, Puente de Piedra and Basilica del Pilar* and it two views in the horizontal “carte de visite” format (left and right). In this case, the CDV framed with red border was not edited by the cabinet of Júdez, but was ordered instead to the contiguous studio (Coso, 35), known as the “Photographic Society of Zaragoza”, which Júdez himself had subleased to another photographer local, Santos Álvarez.

Finally we present a set of images formed by a stereoscopic card, which reproduces a *View of Paseo de la Independencia* (also known in those days as Paseo de Santa Engracia) and its two views in CDV format. As we have already advanced, there is the particularity that one of them was marketed in the vertical format (the one made by the Júdez cabinet itself), while the second presents horizontal orientation and as in the case previously analyzed, the red border and the denomination “Sociedad Fotográfica de Zaragoza” indicates that it was also made from the original negative plate of Júdez by the studio of Santos Álvarez.

We could still expand this list of examples with other urban views such as the famous and missing Leaning Tower of Zaragoza or the waterfalls of the Monasterio de Piedra. In such cases, we have only been able to recover the stereoscopic cards and only one of the two views in cdv format for each of them.

In conclusion and as the recently exposed examples demonstrate, the photographer Mariano Júdez, like many other contemporary photographers, never used multiple-lens cameras (4, 6, 8 lenses, etc.) to make his numerous portraits in the CDV

format and cabinet card, but for that he used the versatility of his stereoscopic camera to make two successive shots. The same can be said of his urban and landscape views, preserved in CDV format. They were not obtained by multiple-objective cameras but by a double objective stereoscopic camera and using a single shot.

20, 21 and 22. *Independence Avenue, Saragossa*

Stereoscopic card and «cartes de visite», Mariano Júdez y Ortiz, 1864-1866. Collections F. Palá / Boisset-Ibáñez

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